

CLAIMS

In the claims:

1. An information distribution system, comprising:
a user subsystem, said user subsystem providing for a request and a response, wherein said user subsystem provides for receiving said request and providing said response;
a listing subsystem, said listing subsystem providing for a plurality of listings, wherein at least a subset of said listings are included in said response; and
an administrative subsystem, said administrative subsystem providing for a tier, wherein said administrative subsystem selectively identifies two or more listings within said response for inclusion in said tier, wherein said listings within said tier are ordered in accordance with at least one of: (a) a random heuristic; (b) a weighted random heuristic; and (c) a placement heuristic not applied to all of the listings in said response.
2. The system of claim 1, further comprising a plurality of priority metrics, wherein said administrative subsystem uses said priority metric to selectively identify said listings for inclusion in said tier.
3. The system of claim 2, further comprising a plurality of rankings, wherein said administrative subsystem uses said rankings to selectively identify said subset of listings for inclusion in said tier.
4. The system of claim 1, further comprising a plurality of tiers.
5. The system of claim 4, wherein said listings within each said tier are ordered in accordance with at least one of: (a) a random heuristic; (b) a weighted random heuristic; and (c) a placement heuristic.
6. The system of claim 4, wherein each listing in said response is included in one of said plurality of tiers.

7. The system of claim 1, further comprising a category selection, wherein said request includes said category selection, and wherein the selective identification of said subset of listings is influenced by said category selection.

8. The system of claim 1, further comprising a geography selection, wherein said request includes said geography selection, and wherein the selective identification of said subset of listings is influenced by said geography selection.

9. The system of claim 1, further comprising a geography selection, wherein the selective identification of said subset of listings is influenced by said geography selection.

10. The system of claim 1, further comprising a plurality of groups, wherein said response includes said plurality of groups, wherein each said listing in said response is associated with at least one said group, and wherein said listings belonging to said tier belong to the same said group.

11. The system of claim 1, further comprising a plurality of geography attributes and a plurality of category attributes, wherein each said listing in said response is associated with at least one said geography attribute and at least one said category attribute.

12. The system of claim 11, wherein each said listing in said tier shares said geography attribute and wherein each said listing in said tier shares said category attribute.

13. The system of claim 1, further comprising a plurality of payment type attributes, wherein each said listing in said response is associated with at least one payment type attribute.

14. The system of claim 13, wherein each said listing in said tier shares said payment type attribute.

15. The system of claim 1, further comprising a category selection and a catkey, wherein said request includes said category selection and said catkey, wherein said category selection and said catkey influence the selective identification of said subset of listings to be included in said response.

16. The system of claim 1, further comprising a minimum bid amount and a plurality of per-hit fees, wherein all said listings within said tier are associated per-hit fees that exceed said minimum bid amount.

17. The system of claim 1, further comprising a plurality of responses, said plurality of responses including a first response and a second response, wherein said first response includes said tier and wherein said second response does not include said tier.

18. The system of claim 17, further comprising a plurality of requests, said plurality of requests including a first request and a second request, wherein said first request causes the display of said first response, and wherein said second request causes the display of said second response.

19. The system of claim 1, wherein only said listings possessing a national tiers including a first tier, a second tier, and a third, tier, and a fourth tier, said plurality of responses including a first response, a second response, and a third response.

20. The system of claim 1, further comprising an enhanced display format, wherein at least one said listing in said response includes said enhanced display format.

21. The system of claim 20, wherein said listing that includes said enhanced display format is included in said tier.

22. The system of claim 1, further comprising a position adjustment factor, wherein at least one said listing in said response includes said position adjustment factor.

23. The system of claim 22, wherein said listing that includes said position adjustment factor is included in said tier.

24. The system of claim 1, further comprising a minimum fee and a plurality of fees, wherein each said listing in said response is associated with at least one said fee, and wherein said fee for each said listing in said response exceeds said minimum fee.

25. The system of claim 1, further comprising a per-hit fee type, a minimum bid increment, and a plurality of per-hit fee values, wherein at least two listings in said response are associated with said per-hit fee type, wherein each said listing associated with said per-hit fee type is associated with at least one said per-hit fee value, and wherein all per-hit fee values are in accordance with said minimum bid increment.

26. The system of claim 1, further comprising a group of national sponsors sharing a common category and a plurality of tiers, wherein said response is comprised entirely of listings associated with said group of national sponsors sharing said common category.

27. The system of claim 26, wherein said tier includes three said listings.

28. The system of claim 1, further comprising a plurality of tiers, a plurality of responses, a plurality of requests, and a plurality of tier processing rules, wherein a number of said tiers and said tier processing rules differ for different said requests.

29. The system of claim 28, further comprising an administrator interface, wherein said administrator interface provides for modifying said tier processing rules.

30. The system of claim 1, further comprising a user location, wherein said system automatically includes said user location as part of said request.

31. The system of claim 1, further comprising a per-hit fee, wherein at least one listing in said response is associated with said per-hit fee.

32. The system of claim 31, further comprising a variable per-hit fee, wherein said per-hit fee is said variable per-hit fee.

33. The system of claim 32, further comprising a number of hits and a period of time in which to measure said number of hits, wherein said number of hits and said period of time influence said variable per-hit fee.

34. The system of claim 1, further comprising a plurality of per-hit fee types.

35. The system of claim 34, wherein said plurality of listings includes a first listing, wherein said first listing is associated with more than one said per-hit fee type.

36. The system of claim 1, further comprising a catkey, wherein said request includes said catkey.

37. The system of claim 36, further comprising a category selection, wherein said request also includes said category selection.

38. A system for distributing information, comprising:

- a depository of information, said depository of information including a plurality of listings;

- a server, said server including a request, a response, a plurality of tiers, and a plurality of administrative rules, said plurality of administrative rules including a plurality of placement heuristics;

- wherein said server is configured to generate said response from said request by accessing said depository of information and said administrative rules;

- wherein said administrative rules provide for ordering said listings included in said response;

- wherein said administrative rules provide for identifying two or more listings in said response as belonging to said tier; and

wherein said administrative rules prioritize said listings within said plurality of tiers using said plurality of placement heuristics.

39. The system of claim 38, said plurality of tiers including a first tier and a second tier, said plurality of placement heuristics including a first placement heuristic and a second placement heuristic, wherein said first placement heuristic orders said listings within said first tier, wherein said second placement heuristic orders said listings within said second tier, and wherein said first placement heuristic is not identical to said second placement heuristic.

40. The system of claim 38, further comprising a plurality of priority metrics, wherein each said listing in said response is associated with at least one of said priority metrics.

41. The system of claim 40, wherein said priority metrics influence the administrative rules in selectively identifying listings for inclusion in said tier.

42. The system of claim 41, wherein said listings are selectively identified for inclusion in said tier in accordance with said priority metrics.

43. The system of claim 41, further comprising a plurality of groups, wherein each said listing in said response is associated with at least one said group, and wherein the affiliations with said groups influence the administrative rules in selectively identifying listings for inclusion in said tier.

44. The system of claim 40, further comprising a plurality of rankings, wherein each said listing in said response includes at least one said ranking, wherein said listings are ranked in accordance with said priority metrics, and wherein said administrative subsystem uses said rankings to selectively identify said listings for inclusion in said tier.

45. The system of claim 40, further comprising a first listing and a second listing, wherein a priority metric associated with said first listing is higher than a priority

metric associated with said second listing, and wherein said second listing is given a more favorable placement than said first listing.

46. The system of claim 38, further comprising a first listing and a second listing and a plurality of per-hit fees, wherein each said listing in said response is associated with at least one said per-hit fee, wherein said per-hit fee associated with said first listing is higher than said per-hit fee associated with said second listing, and wherein said second listing is given a more favorable placement than said first listing.

47. The system of claim 38, further comprising an enhanced display format and a position adjustment factor, wherein at least one said listing is associated with said enhanced display format and wherein at least one said listing is associated with said position adjustment factor.

48. An information distribution system, comprising:

- a user subsystem, said user subsystem providing for a request and a response, wherein said user subsystem provides for receiving said request and providing said response;

- a listing subsystem, said listing subsystem providing for a plurality of listings, wherein at least a subset of said listings are included in said response; and

- an administrative subsystem, said administrative subsystem providing for a plurality of tiers, wherein said administrative subsystem selectively identifies two or more listings within said response for inclusion in said tier, wherein said listings within said tier are ordered in accordance with at least one of: (a) a random heuristic; (b) a weighted random heuristic; and (c) a placement heuristic.

49. A method for displaying a response to a request, comprising:

- configuring a plurality of administrative rules to organize a plurality of listings within a response into at least one tier based on a plurality of tier criteria, wherein said administrative rules include a tier placement heuristic for ordering listings within the tier, wherein all listings within the response do not belong to the tier; and

- inputting the tier criteria to define the number of tiers in the response and the number of listings within the tiers.

50. The method of claim 49, further comprising associating a particular type of placement heuristic to coincide with a particular type of request.

51. The method of claim 49, wherein said system provides for a plurality of request types that includes at least two of: (a) a national request constrained by category; (b) a national request constrained by name; (c) a local request constrained by category; (d) a local request constrained by name; and (e) a phone number submission.

52. The method of claim 49, further comprising loading a computer program on a server to automatically implement the administrative rules without human intervention.

53. The method of claim 49, wherein said administrative rules include a priority metric calculation, and wherein said priority metric calculations influence the positioning of said listings in said response.

54. The method of claim 53, wherein the listings are selectively placed into one of a plurality of tiers in accordance with the priority metric calculations associated with the listings.

55. The method of claim 49, wherein the administrative rules provide that listings belonging to the same tier are ordered in a random fashion.

56. The method of claim 49, wherein the administrative rules provide that listings belonging to the same tier are ordered in a random weighted fashion that is influenced by the corresponding priority metrics.